NEWS

Winchester FD receives recognition for electrical, gas training

NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY | STAFF WRITER

February 26, 2025 . 6:00 AM — 3 min read

Winchester Fire Department received an award from National Grid for completion of its online training course. On hand to receive the award were Firefighter Ryan McManus, left, National Grid Principal Program Manager Tammy Saporito, National Grid Stakeholder Engagement Specialist David Santana, Chief Steven Osborne, Capt. Ken Temple and National Grid Program Manager for New England Gas Emergency Planning Lauren DiSalvatore. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

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While most firefighters will tell you they prefer the hands-on approach when it comes to training, online courses have opened up new opportunities for first responders.

The Winchester Fire Department recently took advantage of such a training offered by National Grid and earlier this month received an award after all 52 members — from firefighters up to the chief — completed the course.

Training Officer Capt. Ken Temple said the National Grid course is free for all first responders and teaches them how to deal with an emergency involving electricity or natural gas.

Temple said the course was eight hours long and involved multiple sections. He encouraged everyone taking it to move at their own pace through the modules.

“This course teaches you what to touch and what not to touch when you’re at a call,” Temple said. “What we can’t handle, we call in National Grid and their experts.”

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The Winchester Fire Department recently completed a first responder online training from National Grid. The department received an award for its 100% completion rate. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

As technology changes, Temple said firefighters are dealing with more complex situations, such as how to handle electric vehicles or solar panels.

"It's true, technology has expanded faster than we can train for," Temple said.

Temple said the National Grid course offered a lot of information, but the overall feedback from the department was very good.

"It was tough to get into at first because it was online, but it was great once you got into it." said Chief Steven Osborne. "You really learned a lot and I believe most of our firefighters felt the same way."

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That's good news to David Santana, Lauren DiSalvatore and Tammy Saporito, who were on hand to give Winchester the award. All three work for National Grid in different aspects covered by the online course.

Santana said the course has been available for the past decade, but has really been underutilized. Many communities don't realize that this is free, self-paced and isn't just for fire or police. He said EMS and even public works can take it — anyone who is first on the scene of an emergency.

"Our aim is to offer guidance and how to approach when it comes to electricity or natural gas," he said.

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Winchester Fire Chief Steven Osborne, center, checks out the plaque from National Grid while David Santana, left, and Capt. Ken Temple, right, look on. WINCHESTER NEWS STAFF PHOTO/NELL ESCOBAR COAKLEY

Some of what the course offers is how to respond to gas leaks, substation fires, overviews of the gas distribution system, an overview of the electrical system and how to approach downed power lines.

And, Santana added, the course is constantly being updated with new information. For example, National Grid in 2017 added a section on solar panels and how to deal with them in case of a house fire.

The best part, Santana said, is when an entire department, such as Winchester, completes the training.

“If the department reaches 100%, we really want to recognize that accomplishment,” he said. “We come out and give them a plaque. It’s important because it strengthens our partnership and commitment to safety.”

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The following was submitted by the Office of Rep. Michael S. Day: Rep. Michael S. Day and his colleagues in the House of Representatives recently passed energy affordability legislation that would result in over $9 billion in savings for utility ratepayers over the next 10 years. The bill maintains critical

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Winchester School Committee candidates bring contrasting backgrounds to Thursday forum

Two candidates for Winchester's School Committee will face voters at a forum as the district navigates a new literacy curriculum, budget pressures and questions about student mental health. Heather von Mering and John Bellaire are competing for an open seat on the School Committee, which oversees a budget von

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FEATURES

‘Chicago: Teen Edition’ dances onto the Winchester High School stage

By Talia Ho | Correspondent Fame. Fortune. And all that jazz. This spring, Winchester High School presents “Chicago: Teen Edition,” a bold musical that explores celebrity culture, media manipulation, and the cost of ambition. Set in the 1920s, this iconic production is sure to leave the audience wanting more. Performances will

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Ripley Chapel in Winchester presents ‘Syldason: You Are Welcome Here’

The following was submitted by the Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church: On Friday, March 13, beginning at 7:30 p.m., live in-person and live streamed from the stunning Ripley Chapel at First Congregational Church, Winchester, 21 Church St., join in with Syldason, a duo concert featuring Sylvie Zakarian,

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